



REMARKS DELIVERED BY THE HONOURABLE, THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF NIGERIA, HON. JUSTICE MAHMUD MOHAMMED, *GCON*, ON THE OCCASION OF THE SWEARING- IN CEREMONY OF HONOURABLE JUSTICES AMINA A. AUGIE AND EJEMBI EKO, AS JUSTICES OF THE SUPREME COURT OF NIGERIA.

HELD AT THE MAIN COURT OF THE SUPREME COURT OF NIGERIA, ON 07 NOVEMBER 2016 AT
2:00 PM

- My Lords, Justices of the Supreme Court here present,
- My Lords, The President of the Court of Appeal and Justices of the Court of Appeal here present,
- My Lords Chief Judges of the Federal and State High Courts here present,
- My Lords, Heads of other Superior Courts of Record,
- Hon. Judges of various Jurisdictions here present,
- The Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice,
- Members of the Management of the National Judicial Council, the Federal Judicial Service Commission and the National Judicial Institute here present,
- Members of the Legal Practitioners Privileges Committee here present,
- Traditional Rulers and Chiefs here present,
- Senior Advocates of Nigeria here present,
- Members of the Body of Benchers here present,
- Learned Members of the Bar,
- Members of the Press
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

REMARKS DELIVERED BY THE HONOURABLE, THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF NIGERIA, HON. JUSTICE MAHMUD MOHAMMED, GCON, ON THE OCCASION OF THE SWEARING- IN CEREMONY OF HONOURABLE JUSTICES AMINA A. AUGIE AND EJEMBI EKO, AS JUSTICES OF THE SUPREME COURT OF NIGERIA, HELD AT THE MAIN COURT ROOM OF THE SUPREME COURT ABUJA, ON 07 NOVEMBER 2016, AT 2:00 PM.

PROTOCOL

We are gathered here for another momentous event in the history of the Supreme Court as we witness the swearing-in of Hon. Justice Amina A. Augie and Hon. Justice Ejembi Eko as Justices of the Supreme Court of Nigeria. I wish to extend my warm congratulations to your lordships on what must be the highlight of your careers, thus far. No doubt, the importance of your new positions as Justices of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, are apparent to you, as is the crucial role you will play as arbiters of Justice. I therefore urge you to acquit yourselves as befits your new office.

I am glad to note that your appointments were sequel to the scrupulous application of the *2014 Revised NJC Guidelines and Procedural Rules for the Appointment of Judicial Officers of all Superior Courts of Record in Nigeria*, following which you emerged as the best candidates.

I am also pleased that your nominations by the National Judicial Council were approved by the President and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari, *GCFR*, following which it was confirmed by the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. I will at this juncture like to express the profound gratitude of the National Judicial Council to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for promptly

appointing Hon. Justices Amina A. Augie and Ejembi Eko as recommended by the Council.

In like manner, permit me to also extend my sincere appreciation to the President of the Senate, Distinguished Senator Abubakar Bukola Saraki and the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Human Rights & Legal Matters, headed by Distinguished Senator David Umaru for expediting the requisite confirmation of both candidates, when called upon to do so.

Your lordships are coming into the Supreme Court at a time when there are a lot of challenges and I believe that having successfully scaled the requisite constitutional and institutional requirements, you are no doubt ready to face these challenges head on. As your lordships take the Oath of Office and the Oath of Allegiance, I urge you both to be faithful to those Oaths as they are the testament of your fidelity to God, the Law and the good people of Nigeria. They are also public pronouncements of your honest commitment to the Almighty to continue to dispense justice without fear or favour, affection or ill-will.

Now more than ever, it is important to be firm, honest and steadfast in the discharge of your duties, while striving to emulate the greats of this Court by enthroning the rule of law and respect for our Courts.

My lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, this ceremony takes place against a backdrop of peculiar circumstances for the Third Arm of the Government of our beloved Nation. It bears reminding that the powers of this Court and indeed all courts, lies in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended). The Constitution is the ultimate repository of the consent of the people and remains the sovereign mandate that forms the bedrock of an independent judiciary. As the American Politician, Donna Brazile put it, “*if you are a*

Supreme Court Justice, the (American) people have elevated you to one of the highest offices in the land out of the goodness of their heart and out of deference to your legal wisdom.”

A common thread that runs through all Judiciaries is that Judicial Officers are traditionally accorded the highest dignity and respect by all. This is because Justice is rooted in confidence and where confidence in our Judges is undermined and independence eroded, it is the nation that ultimately suffers most while true democracy is fatally undermined.

Certainly, the decision of the National Judicial Council at its last meeting reflects our desire to preserve this independence. Hence, we proclaimed to the World that any Judicial Officer that is standing trial will cease to perform judicial functions. The Council took this stand following communications it received from the Hon. Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice that he was embarking on the prosecution of the- affected Judicial Officers for the offences disclosed against them from the evidence on the ground.

We must not forget that we operate a constitutional democracy, which clearly prescribes the powers accorded to each organ of the State. I therefore wish to state without fear of contradiction that the Third Arm of Government will remain resolute in its commitment and resolve to uphold its independence and to adjudicate with utmost fairness and justice as prescribed in our Constitution and the Law.

To our new Justices of the Supreme Court and all other Judicial Officers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I charge you to continue to be diligent in the discharge of your duties.

You must remain blind to personality and status and remain the hope of all

men, whether common or uncommon. Hence, the integrity and impartiality of our courts must not be in question or compromised. I am confident that with the institutions and initiatives that we have put in place, the Nigerian Judiciary will evolve to meet the high standards demanded by our citizens.

I once again extend our sincere congratulations to your lordships for your well deserved appointments to the Supreme Court. We welcome you both on board and look forward to your erudite and valuable contributions to the jurisprudence of the Court and the development of the Law in Nigeria. I pray that the Almighty Allah will grant you good health, strength and wisdom to properly perform your duties.

Thank you and May God bless all of us.

Mahmud Mohammed, GCON
Chief Justice of Nigeria